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Eminem Copes With Professional Highs, Personal Lows

Rapper says he's conflicted about celebrating his success while troubles torment him.

By archive-Teri-vanHorn

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SAN JOSE, Calif. — For **Eminem**, the highs don't get higher, and the lows don't get lower.

"It's been a rough couple of weeks," the 26-year-old rapper said Monday night.

That may not be a statement you'd expect from an artist who's held the #1 album in the country during that time, but Eminem's life is pretty complicated these days. As his third album, *The Marshall Mathers LP*, triumphs, Eminem's personal life, as he put it, "ain't going so hot."

"I should be celebrating, but do I really have anything to celebrate about?" he said. "Not really."

Eminem faces criminal charges in his home state of Michigan following two unrelated incidents the weekend of June 3–4. In the first incident, the rapper allegedly pulled a gun during an altercation with an associate of rival rappers **Insane Clown Posse** in Royal Oak. Less than nine hours later, police said, Eminem spotted a man kissing his wife, Kimberly Mathers, in the parking lot of a Warren bar and pistol-whipped him in the head. The man has vowed to sue the rapper.

Eminem declined to comment on the charges as he sat in his backstage dressing room at the San Jose Arena on Monday night, shortly after performing his solo set on the Up in Smoke tour. Clad in a white T-shirt and black sports pants, he spoke in a calm voice.

Tour Provides Distraction

The rapper said the tour — which also features **Dr. Dre**, **Snoop Dogg**, **Ice Cube** and **Nate Dogg** — has provided him much-needed distance from his recent problems. "I think being on this tour is probably the best thing to get my mind off what's going on in my personal life," he said. "It gives me something constructive to do with my time, other than sit home and soak in my personal problems. ... I guess what I do best is making music and entertaining crowds, so that's why I figured I'd get on this tour and just do what I love doing."

The Marshall Mathers LP, which features the single "The Real Slim Shady" (RealAudio excerpt), has spent the last three weeks on top of the *Billboard* 200 albums chart. The disc, which bears his real name, is considerably angrier in tone than its more comically oriented predecessor, last year's *The Slim Shady LP*. Eminem rhymes about raping his mother and killing women, makes several remarks that could be construed as homophobic and takes swipes against everyone from President Clinton to ***NSync**.

"I may tend to push a lot of buttons and tend to piss a lot of people off — a lot of critics, and a lot of people who don't really know hip-hop," Eminem said. "But that's basically what I came to do, is upset that balance of everything that is normal everyday things that people are used to hearin'.

"My main purpose of even coming here was to shake things up a little bit," he said. "But at the same time, I [want] people to know that not everything I say is meant to be taken literally."

Reflections Of Real Life

Eminem's recent troubles echo some of the content on the record, which includes jabs at Insane Clown Posse and a song called "Kim," in which he raps about catching his wife cheating on him. "A lot of my last album was real fictional, it was real fictional trailer-park humor," he said. "Even before what happened to me a couple weeks ago, making this album was a lot more personal."

With an ominous backdrop, "Kim" (

href="http://media.addict.com/music/Eminem/Kim.ram">

RealAudio excerpt) details a fight between Eminem and his wife.

The song has been billed as a prequel to *The Slim Shady LP*'s "

'97 Bonnie & Clyde," in which his alter ego murders his wife and brings

their daughter along while he disposes of the body in a lake.

Eminem said he wrote "Kim" while the couple were having an argument.

"I don't really listen to the song anymore," he said. "[It's] kind of like an outtake from one of our arguments in everyday life. That's really how we fight sometimes. ... [It was] anger built up from what she had done to me and what we was going through, our little thing, and I made it into a song."

Several songs on the album find Eminem reacting to the pitfalls of his success. The rapper pointed to "Stan," a number about an obsessed fan, and "The Way I Am" — featuring the line "I'm so sick and tired of being admired" — as songs that "show people how I really felt."

"I think one of the reasons why I'm in the trouble I'm in now is because I refuse to believe that I need to walk around with security or I need to have someone hold my hand everywhere I go," he said. "It's a really hard thing to accept just not being able to play basketball at the same court I played basketball at all of my life, you know what I'm sayin'? ... It's a really hard thing to deal with, and I've been trying to deal with it for the past year. Maybe I'm not dealing with it as good as other people do."